

## **Note of Melksham Area Board Health and Wellbeing Group held on**

### **Tuesday 22 February 2022 at Melksham Town Hall**

#### **1. Present**

Cllr Nick Holder (Chairman), Cllr Mike Sankey, Cllr Jonathon Seed, Peter Dunford – Melksham Area Board

David Walker – Melksham Carers' Champion

Patsy Clover – Melksham Town Council

Teresa Strange - Melksham Without Parish Council

Dr Claire Rigby, Amanda Brookes - Melksham and Bradford on Avon Primary Care Network

Moira Conroy, Jackie Maton - Social Prescribers, Primary Care Network

Rebecca Seymour – Celebrating Age Wiltshire

Sue Denmark - Care Home Volunteers

Jo Woodsford – Healthwatch Wiltshire

Louisa Lewis, Dee McLeod – Melksham Free Dining

John Firth – That Meeting Space

Sarah-Toshi Parsons – interested person

**2. Apologies:** Chris Pickett (Mens Shed), Ashley Harris (Carer Support Wiltshire), Chris Guest (Blenheim House), Stephany Bardzil (Alzheimers Support), Sarah Cardy (Age UK Wiltshire), Emma Cade (WC Wellbeing and Prevention Service), Cllr Phil Alford (Melksham Area Board)

#### **3. Introductions**

All briefly introduced themselves.

#### **4. Carers and Caring**

The Chairman introduced David Walker who has been appointed by the Area Board as “Carers Champion for Melksham”.

David talked movingly about his personal journey of caring for 12 years for his wife who had early-onset Alzheimers, about trying to navigate the myriad care support

networks and about the loneliness and endless patience required for a 24/7 unpaid caring role. Also about the deep sense of emptiness in life when your loved one passes away and the emotional, physical and financial impacts of loss. David's slides are appended with this note of the meeting.

David will be discussing his role with stakeholders to agree a small number of targeted activities in support of carers. He will publicise his work through the local press and will make himself available to speak to local groups about his experiences. Quick wins might include the establishment of a "carers café" and information events around Carers Week in June .

The Chairman reminded the group that the Melksham Area Board has agreed to fund an event for Young Carers as a "thank you" for their important work, much of which goes unnoticed. It is hoped to hold the event at the new Community Campus in October half term this year, hopefully offering free use of the sporting facilities. The funds will also pay for Agency staff to cover the time duration of the event, so that the young person can relax for few hours in the knowledge that the person they care for is in good hands. Local businesses will be approached to see if any of them are prepared to provide sponsorship for a gift for each of the young carers.

**ACTION:** Melksham Area Board to agree a focus for the Carers Champion role at its forthcoming meeting on 9 March

**ACTION:** Further discussions with stakeholders to be held around the proposed Young Carers event, including with young carers themselves

## **5. Groups and Activities for Older People in Melksham**

Moira Conroy shared a listing that she has compiled of groups and activities for older people in Melksham which includes lunch clubs, day centres, friendship groups, church groups, dementia support, fitness, singing, walking and other social activities. This mostly covers the town, but not most of the villages, and provides a constantly evolving record from which to build a local directory.

Moira, Jackie and other "social prescribing" colleagues often bring elderly and vulnerable clients along to these sessions and report the transformative impact on their health and wellbeing of having human contact and the chance to develop new friendships.

A recurring issue that is reported, however, is the lack of transport to take the old and vulnerable to attend these local activities.

**ACTION:** Discussions to be held with LINK and the community bus to publicise the community transport options available.

**ACTION:** Peter Dunford, with others, to keep the directory up to date and to include activities and services in the villages local to Melksham

## **6. Melksham and Bradford on Avon Primary Care Network**

Dr Claire Rigby and Amanda Brookes provided an update on the work of the PCN which covers 48,000 patients registered with the primary care practices at Spa and Giffords surgeries in Melksham and in Bradford on Avon.

A fantastic service continues to be delivered under very trying circumstances, including delivery of 90,000 vaccines at the clinic at the Spencers Sports and Social Club. The combined pressures of COVID, staff shortages and population growth in the local area has resulted in a 40% rise in demand for doctor appointments. New “social prescribing”, “health and wellbeing” and “carers champions” posts have been created as a response to a growing focus on delivering care in the community.

A review of the NHS estate has been delayed but is underway with decisions expected soon on plans for new capacity at doctors surgeries as well as the future of hospital sites at Chippenham and at Melksham being determined. Cllr Holder has spoken to Simon Yeo, NHS Estates Manager, who has agreed to come to present the new plans to the group once these are in the public domain.

**ACTION:** Simon Yeo and NHS locality lead, Elizabeth Disney, to be invited to speak to a future meeting.

## **7. Celebrating Age Wiltshire**

Rebecca Seymour gave an update on the delivery of a programme of lottery-funded arts, music and theatre in the Melksham area. Events over the past year have had to be mostly outdoor and socially distanced: “doorstep concerts” for elderly and vulnerable clients; a Christmas concert at the Riverside Club; 1-2-1 “creative conversations”; and “noticing nature” art classes held at That Meeting Space. A programme of Spring outdoor concerts is coming, as is a theatre afternoon with afternoon tea at the Riverside Club on 29 March.

Jonathon Seed asked for more activities to be held in the villages.

**ACTION:** Rebecca Seymour to discuss opportunities for delivery of events in village halls and other more rural settings.

## **8. That Meeting Space**

John Firth described how the Good News Church had taken on the lease of the former Art House Café and set it up as a space for use by the church and the community. In addition to religious activities, in a short space of time the centre has helped to facilitate a number of community events: drop-in socials for older people; “tech savvy” sessions for IT support; bereavement counselling; a singalong group; a book club; and “noticing nature” art sessions.

Future plans include a memory café in association with Alzheimers Support and a drop-in for ex-military personnel.

**ACTION:** Discuss possible grant funding from the Area Board, including for piloting a “Carers Café”

## **9. Health and Wellbeing Grant application:**

### **Melksham Free Dining requesting £1,700 for the “Coming Together to Dine With Us” project to support the costs of free lunches and after-meal social activities for the elderly and vulnerable**

Louisa Lewis and Dee McLeod outlined their bid for financial support to provide a free two course nutritious lunch to Melksham residents and the surrounding areas, with the option to stay after the meal and join in the social activities, interact with others and ask for advice on personal matters. Grant support will help with consumables, catering equipment, transportation and communication costs.

The charity, which is awaiting accreditation with the Charities Commission, is focused on addressing food poverty, loneliness and social isolation among the vulnerable elderly population, delivering its lunches at Bowerhill Village Hall every Wednesday. As well as providing a nutritious meal and social activities, its DBS-checked volunteers provide a support network with signposting and aftercare services to its clients.

Meals are provided free of charge with no donations taken and all staff work without pay as volunteers. The average attendance is 42 people per lunch session. The cost price is £3 per person per meal which means that this grant application would provide for approximately 12 weeks service.

Grants and sponsorship have been, or are being, secured from the Town Council, Parish Council, Happy Circle Day Centre, Almshouses Trust and from private individuals. Sponsorship in kind has come from the Reefa Tandoori.

Cllrs Seed and Sankey were very supportive of the initiative and suggested that a larger grant might be appropriate in order to guarantee a longer term sustainability for the service.

Cllr Holder asked about the needs assessment of those attending and whether they were genuinely vulnerable and in food poverty. Dee confirmed that no checks are carried out but that “we know our clients and it finds its own level, with those who can afford to buy their own lunch soon doing so elsewhere”.

After questions all members declared themselves supportive of the application.

**RECOMMENDATION: The Melksham Health and Wellbeing Group recommends that Melksham Free Dining be awarded £1,700 for the “Coming Together to Dine With Us” project to support the costs of free lunches and after-meal social activities for the elderly and vulnerable**

**Note taken by Peter Dunford, Community Engagement Manager**